



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
SOLID WASTE AND EMERGENCY
RESPONSE

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Launching the Innovations Initiative

/s/ December 1, 2001

FROM: Marianne Horinko

TO: OSWER Senior Managers, Headquarters and Regions

My six weeks as AA of OSWER, thus far, have been anything but uneventful. However, despite the demands placed on all of us since September 11, I still believe that it is important to stay focused on our more traditional mission, and continue to implement the ambitious agenda that I have described to many of you in speeches and in writing.

The Innovations Challenge

I want to charge all of OSWER programs with not only a great challenge but an even greater opportunity. As many of you know, I plan to form a special office devoted to creating partnerships and spurring innovation, which I hope will become symbolic of my tenure here at EPA. I have asked Marjorie Buckholtz, who is known for her role in developing the Brownfields program from a good idea in 1992, to an award-winning effort which has cleaned up and restored thousands of acres of property, to lead this important new initiative. With your help, I would like to initiate a series of innovative pilots that will test our new ideas and strategies for making OSWER programs more efficient, cost effective, user-friendly, and understandable to the general public, while of course, ensuring the protection of human health and the environment.

Overarching Principles

While pilots will be as unique and diverse as the programs from which they are born, there are certain overarching criteria which should be considered at the beginning of the process. These include EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment and a determination that the project addresses a critical challenge or unmet need of the program. In addition, while I do not want to discourage innovative thinking to address OSWER issues, we will focus initially on ideas that fall within the five priority areas I have outlined as OSWER's new AA:

- (1) A national dialogue on the nation's cleanup programs with an eye toward creating one cleanup program mentality,
- (2)Energy recovery, recycling, waste minimization,

- (3) A major retail initiative that encourages consumers and individuals to think about environmental issues,
- (4) Revitalization of communities through economic redevelopment; and
- (5) Workforce development, succession planning.

Universal Objectives

Several universal objectives will drive the way we meet our innovation goals: The use of diverse partnerships (State, local, public/private) to achieve environmental goals; improved economic efficiency; cross-media linkages to other OSWER, Agency and Federal, Tribal and local programs; novelty and the likelihood of short, mid and long- term success that is concrete, quantifiable and understandable to the lay person. In addition, pilots should be replicable, and address a concern of major importance to the Agency and the public. In understanding such an effort, I recognize that we may be taking some risk, particularly if we undertake projects which have never been done before. However, I believe that it is important to move forward with such a process, bearing in mind, that we sometimes learn more from failure than success.

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Tangible and Intangible Outcomes

Finally, outcomes from pilots fall within two major categories; tangible and intangible. Tangible outcomes yield quantifiable results such as acres cleaned up; jobs created, cheaper energy or cheaper disposal methods. Intangible outcomes are harder to capture but may be equally important. Examples include; quality of life improvements in local communities; creating a climate for positive change with regulators; promoting understanding of the links between decreases in greenhouse gasses; less energy use and waste minimization and recycling.

The Process

Today, I am asking all OSWER program offices and all 10 regions to submit names of at least one individual who will serve as innovator for your office. This innovator will be part of a newly formed Innovations Work Group (IWG), that will consist of individuals who can be developed into change agents for OSWER. The IWG will serve as the nerve center of creative problem solving for OSWER, and will hold monthly meetings in which new pilot ideas are discussed, or problems and issues relating to innovation might be shared and solved.

I will be setting aside a small amount of innovation pilot funding, which the group will help manage and allocate to worthy pilot projects. The group will develop a process for working with the larger EPA innovations office, which is headed by Tom Gibson, and will develop final selection criteria and flesh out the details of how OSWER selects and manages its innovation pilots. I understand that some of your offices have been deluged with a variety of innovation pilot ideas, and I am hoping that this process will alleviate some of the confusion and create a more orderly system for selecting and implementing pilots. Unfortunately, not every good idea is worthy of a pilot, and often, even the worthy ones cannot be tackled for one reason or another. This innovation framework is kind of a pilot itself, as we will be experimenting and hopefully improving our methods as we develop this model further.

A critical challenge will be to effectively link the innovations expectations between the bureaucratic needs of budgeting and staffing to the creative and entrepreneurial spirit that moves out-of-the-box approaches to the forefront.

Getting There from Here

Three Priorities Areas:

OSWER's three key priority areas of Revitalization, Energy Recovery and Waste Minimization will be the focus, at present, of criteria developed for innovative approaches. Workforce development and the move toward one cleanup program will be considered for innovative pilots at a later date.

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I recently asked a small group of OSWER staff to identify some issue-specific criteria for selecting Innovations pilots. As we develop our process, these criteria will be refined and improved. However, I thought it might be helpful to include our initial thinking on outcome-related criteria, as you think of potential pilot projects for your Offices.

Revitalization through economic development

Criteria may include, but not be limited to:

- 1) Number of properties cleaned up
- 2.) Number of properties reused
- 3) Acres of greenspace protected
- 4) Number of jobs created
- 5) Measurements of healthy and sustainable reuse (not just big box stores)
- 6) Demonstration of faster cleanup in time saved
- 7) Private Sector dollars leveraged through public investment
- 8) Measures of improved quality of life in communities: (crime prevention, access to grocery and medical offices, cleaner, brighter neighborhoods) (I)

Energy Recovery, Recycling, Waste Minimization (Hazardous and Non-Hazardous)

Criteria may include, but not be limited to:

- 1) Dollars saved in electricity generation
- 2) Measurable savings of natural resources
- 3) Measurable savings in disposal methods
- 4) Savings through adoption of new technologies such as bio-reactor landfills
- 5) Cost savings through locating co-generation plants on former brownfields
- 6) Energy savings through rehabbing brownfield properties in greener, cleaner ways
- 7) Creating acceptance on all government levels of new technologies measured by increase in their use on cleanup sites (I)
- 8) Promoting the links between decreases in greenhouse gasses, diminished energy use and waste minimization and recycling through articles published and workshops held(I)
- 9) Measurable protection of natural resources, e.g., acres preserved, species protected

Retail Initiative: A Two-Pronged Approach

One option would be development of a public relations/education campaign to engage the average consumer. Focus would be on day-to-day decision making and raising awareness of the environmental consequences of personal choices, while engaging the manufacturing sector on stewardship issues regarding product development, packaging and disposal.

Criteria may include, but not be limited to:

- 1) Measurable energy savings of greener manufacturing approaches
- 2) Measurable consumer awareness with before and after survey tools
- 3) Measurable changes in buying habits of consumers
- 4) Measurable improvements in manufacturing, packaging and waste disposal
- 5) Demonstrable cost-effectiveness of greener manufacturing
- 6) Demonstrable increases in recycling or diminished landfill waste
- 7) Demonstrable increases in economically viable disposed articles being recycled 4

Timing

Please send Marjorie the names of your IWG member by December 30, 2001. We hope to have it up and running by early 2002. I hope that we will be able to begin accepting innovation pilot nominations shortly thereafter.